

# The Semaphore

A PUBLICATION OF TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS



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# TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

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**Cover:** Is the Presidio Trust about to make one of the biggest development blunders in the history of San Francisco? The Friends of the Presidio National Park's Bill Henslin examines the Trust's plans to build an 850,000 square foot office complex in our National Park. Story on page 13. Cover design by Chris Carlsson. Photo by Bob McMillan.



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*The Semaphore* is a publication of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers for its members. Articles, except for the summary of Board of Directors' Motions, do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Association or its Officers, but are the opinions of the writers of the individual signed articles. The Association can take no responsibility for their content. This membership publication is not to be reprinted or disseminated without written permission.

# EDITOR'S DESK

## Survey Says...

By Bob McMillan

I have to admit, I was a little nervous about asking the entire THD membership—a group of people not known for being reticent with its opinions—what they thought of the *Semaphore* in our Fall 2002 *Semaphore* Survey. Would we get blasted for putting Emperor Norton on the cover? Would there be cries for more articles about animals? Would every typo we'd ever let slip come back to haunt us?

Well, if there was one message to take from the THD members who took the time to fill out our reader's survey, it was "Relax. We like what you're doing."

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But though many of the comments were complimentary, there were also some interesting trends in what you said. Your two favorite sections were Aaron Peskin's and Gerry Crowley's regular columns. People seem to either read the Planning and Zoning report religiously, or not at all. Development issues and local history were the things you asked to see covered more often, but readers also suggested some very interesting new areas for us to cover: stories for the sports-inclined Hill Dweller was one. Another was to write more about long standing infrastructure issues, such as the Embarcadero's nasty and intermittent sewer odor.

So thanks to all of you who filled out the survey, and congratulations to *Semaphore* Survey Contest winners Bill Kedem, Joseph Parrilli, and Stanley Diamond. They'll each be receiving snazzy new THD sweatshirts.

And if you have any more ideas of stories we should be covering, feel free to drop me a line. ☺

## THD Board Motions

### September

No motions

### October

No motions

### November

The Board made the following motion with respect to the Emperor Norton project (See pg. XX. —ed): "Given the strongly held and differing viewpoints regarding the proposed Norton statue project the THD Board takes no position at this time." ☺

Tellie Hill dwellers may remember Helen von Ammon's 80 birthday all-Bach concert, brilliantly performed by John Renke, Director of Music at St. Francis of Assisi Shrine. So get your calendars out. John Renke will play at Noontime Concerts on January 29, at 12:30 pm at St Patrick's, 756 Mission St. Program will include Couperin and Guilmant's Sonata.

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# THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Gerry Crowley

**S**everal months ago, I received a voicemail message from one of our members stating that he would be selling some North Beach memorabilia at an Alamo Square flea market. On the appointed Saturday morning, I parked illegally, found Joe's display, and purchased 10 issues of the *Little City News* dating from 1953-1965 as well as a menu from the New Tivoli on Grant Avenue, known today as the Savoy Tivoli. Those yellowed newspapers provide much of the material for my column.

In the January 15, 1953 edition of *Little City News*, the front page declared "Mrs. Virginia Anderlini, charming president elect of the Italian Welfare Agency's Women's Auxiliary, marked her natal day yesterday." Yes, this is THD member Virginia Anderlini, who is still charming and still receiving press coverage. In the September 4, 2002 Home & Garden section of the *Chronicle*, Virginia and husband Andy are featured in the cover story about Andy's famous rose garden on the Filbert Steps at the corner of Montgomery Street. On the same front page, attorney Elios Anderlini is noted as being elected to the board of directors of the North Beach Merchants and Boosters Association. Yes, this is "Andy" our famous gardener who brings joy to the visitors and residents who stop to smell the roses.

Sunday dinner was available in 1953 at the Italian Family Club at 678 Green Street for \$1.50. Today, at the same location, depending on the day and time, one pays \$25-\$65 to see Beach Blanket Babylon at the Club Fugazi. During the



same year, Spencer Tracy and Gene Tierney were featured in *Plymouth Adventure* at the Palace Theater. Today, the same theater is an abandoned project and I am hoping that current talks with a potential savior are productive. Meanwhile, I've recently made calls to DPW about the posters on the temporary walls outside the theater so that the owners can be cited. Not only are the posters an illegal eyesore, but the splattered glue on the sidewalk is offensive. Thanks to Mel Clay for keeping me informed.

Fast forward to issues from the 1960s where the articles in the *Little City News* deal with neighborhood concerns about the detrimental effects of the "nudie-topless show" on the Broadway strip. In 1965, THD joined with other civic and church groups to demand action, particularly in the form of additional police coverage. Groups met with members of the Board of

*continued on p. 7*

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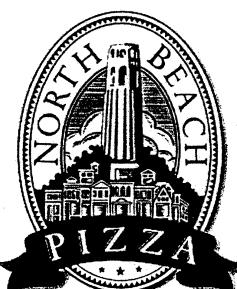
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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER *continued*

Supervisors, Chief Cahill and Mayor Shelley. The results? More meetings planned. One Mrs. Joseph Bloise of 1163 Kearny Street spearheaded THD action by meeting with Captain Barca at Central Station to request increased foot patrol.

Parking issues received attention in the '60s. The garage on the north side of Vallejo between Powell and Stockton was built as part of the Central Station construction project to accommodate 108 cars for less than \$600,000. A movement was initiated to build an underground parking facility under Washington Square Park. Today, a second garage exists in the same block on Vallejo Street, the most expensive per-space garage ever built in San Francisco, and—with particular gratitude to then-mayor Jack Shelley—Washington Square Park does not suffer the indignities of its sister parks at Union Square and Portsmouth Square: concrete lawns and gasoline fumes.

When Officer Fred Crisp and Captain Steve Tacchini of Central Station read articles from the Little City News, they both chuckled at the fact that the issues of yesteryear are the issues of today: police under-staffing, budget constraints, lack of parking. That lesson was not lost on me, but these articles also showed the importance of community involvement, of waging battles to preserve and protect our neighborhood, and of respecting our history and those who've gone before us.

## SHOP LOCALLY!

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Telegraph Hill Dwellers and Friends of Washington Square are currently lobbying the Recreation and Park Department to designate Washington Square as a neighborhood park rather than a city park. The consensus is that this city landmark is over-used, and suggested guidelines to restrict its use and to control sound amplification have been presented to the city.

Each year San Francisco Beautiful publicly recognizes individuals, groups and businesses responsible for making an aesthetic contribution to the city. Consideration is given to artistic design, overall impact and water conservation characteristics which promote the beauty and livability of San Francisco. The Pioneer Park Project was recognized with an award at San Francisco Beautiful's annual dinner in October. Congratulations to all those who labored so long and so successfully to re-set the crown jewel at Coit Tower.

Stay tuned.



**Mary T. Cronin, M.F.T.**  
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# Planning and Zoning Committee Report

By Mary Lipian, Nancy Shanahan & Nan Roth

## I. Telegraph Hill Historic District

*(This historic district on the east side of Telegraph Hill was established in 1986 to preserve the largest group of pre-1870 structures in the City.)*

**1. 21 Alta Street**—The renovation/restoration of this 1862 Italianate structure (Michalsen Grocery) is coming along well. Most of the aluminum windows have now been replaced with wooden double- or single-hung windows, the shingles have been removed and horizontal wood siding has now been installed on the front (Alta Street) elevation and east wall. Other work underway includes the reconstruction of an existing bay window, installation of new wood railings to match existing ones in several locations, and replacement of existing wood decks. All four rental units are being retained and renovated.

**2. 23 Alta Street**—The Department of Public Works is requiring the removal one of the two driveway curb cuts (only one curb cut is allowed).

**3. Greenwich Street Steps Garden**—With a \$5,000 grant from San Francisco Beautiful, a project has been initiated by a THD special committee to clean up, add plants, maintain and beautify the historic gardens located within the public right-of-way along the 200 block of Greenwich Street. The fiscal sponsor for this project is the Northeast San Francisco Conservancy, a tax-exempt 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

**4. The Heslett Compound**—GOOD NEWS! This collection of historic, pre-1906-earthquake cottages along the Greenwich Steps garden are under contract of sale to a group including several current residents of the cottages who are committed to preserving and protecting this sensitive part of the Telegraph Hill Historic District through a conservation easement.

**5. 212 Union Street**—Concerns of nearby neighbors regarding the extensive construction parking required during the construction of the new building on this site led to legislation reforming the Building Department's permit issuance and fee collection for construction parking (see Section VIII below—ed.). The next phase of this project will include the renovation and restoration of the 1880's Greek Revival cottage.

**6. 290 Union St.**—The Planning Department is still reviewing plans submitted by the developer for changes required to be made to bring this project into compliance with a recorded Notice of Special Restrictions (NSR) imposed by the Planning Commission and upheld by the Board of Appeals.

## II. OTHER RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS

**1. 520 Chestnut St.**—The owner is in pre-design stages of a proposal to demolish the existing warehouse structure and replace it with housing.

**2. 391 Filbert (Filbert Steps at Kearny adjacent to Pioneer Park)**—In July of 2001, the City approved a third variance (from rear yard requirements of the code) to allow for the significant expansion of this cottage on the Filbert Steps, including the addition of two floors. The Variance was conditioned on THD's review of the final design details and the owner's guarantee that the project would be compatible in scale and design with its sensitive site and not block off the windows of the adjacent building to the east. New plans for this project have now been submitted to the City.

**3. 1119-1121 Kearny Street**—A notice has just been received of a proposal to demolish this residential building on the Kearny Street (Macchiarini) Steps.

**4. 1454-56 Kearny Street**—Despite THD's request to the owners of this fire-damaged property to consider (1) building according to the most current building code requirements so that the building would be as safe a structure as possible; and (2) deleting or redesigning the penthouse on its roof for greater neighborhood compatibility, the owners are rebuilding exactly as it existed prior to the fire.

**5. North Beach Place Housing (bounded by Columbus, Bay, Mason & Francisco) and Cable Car Turntable**—This joint project of BRIDGE Housing Corp., The John Stewart Company and EM Johnson, in partnership with the S.F. Housing Authority, will replace the former public housing project with 341 affordable family and senior apartments and approximately 20,000 square feet of commercial space. Financing for the project—coming from HUD, the Housing Authority, private lenders and over \$40 mil-

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## PLANNING AND ZONING *continued from previous page*

lion in tax credits—is in place and the second phase of the demolition has begun. Trader Joe's is expected to be the primary commercial tenant. Because this project straddles the cable car turntable on Mason Street, a public process is now underway to elicit ideas and input for its re-design as a part of the rebuilding of this public housing project. A representative of THD is attending the public meetings and making suggestions for the design of the structure. The greatest obstacle that the cable car turntable project faces is funding, since there is no money in the housing project budget to pay for it.

**6. 1918-22 Powell St. (across from the North Beach Playground)**—Arguing that the existing 1906-7 structures are “unsound,” the project proponent wants to demolish the existing four-story, 3-unit residential building, a residential cottage located at the rear of the lot, and a one-story garage structure, and replace them with a four-story 6-unit condominium structure that would impact the rear yards of several adjacent neighbors. The structures proposed for demolition are typical North Beach structures that sit well within the neighborhood fabric and character of the street. The cottage at the back may have been an earthquake shack.

**7. 368 Vallejo**—An adjoining neighbor's appeal is pending before the Board of Appeals of this project to demolish the existing turn-of-the-century, 12-foot-wide house and replace it with a modern glass and metal structure, which includes an above-ground addition to the rear yard and a below-grade room to occupy the entire rear yard area.

**8. 430 Vallejo St.**—A variance hearing was held in November on the owner's proposal to legalize work previously done in the required rear-yard area of this property consisting of the installation of a metal spiral stairway from the top floor of the building to the ground, a landing of approximately 20 square feet at the top-floor level, and the construction of a rear perimeter fence a portion of which is 11 feet, 5 inches tall. The variance was granted on condition that the size of the landing/porch be reduced and the height of the fence be lowered.

**9. Vallejo St. Project (559-69 Vallejo, bounded by Vallejo, Romolo and Fresno)**—There is a proposal to build five new dwelling units and a public pay parking garage on this 4,616 sq. ft. site that currently includes

two existing residential structures (which would be demolished) and a large open pay parking lot. Because of the size and magnitude of the proposal, the Planning and Zoning Committee has requested a massing study and has urged the developer to work with the community with regard to: 1) reducing the overall height of the structure and roof top features, 2) reducing the overall mass of the building, 3) working on the design of the ground floor and entries along Vallejo Street to ensure greater compatibility with the neighboring structures, 4) eliminating the visibility of the parking garage from all elevations and 5) exploring the possibility of providing more than five units of housing on such a large site (would only increase the existing number of units on the site by one).

### III. NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

*(In 1987, the North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District Ordinance was adopted to maintain the character and mix of businesses in North Beach.)*

**1. 1249-55 Grant Ave. (Caffe Trieste)**—Work is underway to seismically upgrade the residential hotel building in which the Caffe Trieste is located. THD worked with the structural engineer to minimize, to the maximum extent possible, the effect of this work to the existing facade and windows, as well as the interior of the cafe.

**2. 1438 Grant Ave. (Savoy Tivoli)**—Soundproofing work, including the installation of permanent sound deadening tile board on the ceiling in the patio area and an exterior awning structure made of sound absorbing material, has been completed.

**3. 701 Lombard Street (triangular parking lot bounded by Columbus, Lombard and Mason across from the North Beach Pool)**—Nothing new to report on this proposed project to construct a four-story, nine-unit condominium building on its 4,000 sq foot site. As originally proposed, it will be 40 feet high, plus a roof deck, with two small ground floor retail shops at the Columbus Avenue building corners. There will be nine interior ground floor parking stalls. We are hoping to see revised plans that will increase the size of the ground floor commercial units, move the lobby to the Lombard/Columbus Avenue corner, add details that will enhance the ground floor, and utilize high quality

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## PLANNING AND ZONING

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materials for exterior.

**4. 1831 Powell (in Powell Street Shops National Register-eligible District)**—This is a proposal to make a two story vertical addition to this one-story historic building that would destroy the cornice and materials of the front facade. Because this particular block of Powell Street has been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the P & Z Committee felt that any alterations to this structure should be done in a manner that protects the historic features and character. In this regard we suggested that consideration be given to setting the addition back from the front facade, maintaining the Planning Code-required 25 percent open space at the front of the property, thereby preserving the front of the existing structure.

**5. 1968 Powell (SF Battle Zone)**—Still unresolved are the issues surrounding the legality under the City's current zoning code of the conversion of a small neighborhood grocery store at this address into an Internet cafe without a new permit. Although the City Zoning Administrator (ZA) ruled that computers used for game playing fall under the definition of "Amusement Game Arcades" (defined by the Planning Code as 11 or more mechanical or electrical amusement devices) which are not allowed in Neighborhood Commercial Districts, and that 10 or less would be classified as "Other Entertainment" which would require a public hearing Conditional Use Authorization from the Planning Commission, this ruling was appealed by the owner to the Board of Permit Appeals where it is still pending. We think the issue may require an amendment to the zoning laws to define Internet cafe for permitting purposes.

## IV. BROADWAY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

*(This Neighborhood Commercial District extends along Broadway from west of Columbus Ave to Osgood Place).*

**1. 270 Columbus Ave. (Historic Bank of America Building)**—The conversion of this long-vacant space, formerly occupied by Carl's Jr., has been completed and a new cafe called "Schilling" (of Alfred Shilling Chocolate) is now open for business.

**2. 240 Columbus Ave.**—There is a proposal to significantly alter the facade of this storefront (located

next door to Tosca Café) which is internally connected to the Hustler Club. The building permit for this alteration is on hold until an enforcement action filed against the Hustler Club is resolved, since no new permits can be issued while enforcement actions are pending. Ironically, the enforcement action was instituted by Boys Toys charging that the Hustler Club is "adult entertainment" and, therefore, is not allowed by the zoning code in this location within 1,000 feet of another "adult entertainment" use.

**3. 303-307 Columbus Ave.**—A renovation is underway to convert this retail space, formerly a Fox Photo store, into another full service restaurant serving beer and wine.

## V. WATERFRONT

*(The following was prepared by Nan Roth, Chair of THD's Waterfront Committee.)*

**1. 840-48 Battery (NE Waterfront Historic Dist.)**—NBC, the new lessee of this historic warehouse, got Landmarks Board approval to add a large microwave antenna to the roof and a new generator and other equipment to this site, with the condition (as suggested by THD) that these additions be removed when the tenant vacates the building. By a separate application (and over the objection of THD) the Landmarks Board approved an additional COA for the addition of two illuminated signs to the building—on the Front Street and Battery Street sides. In response, the Historic District Subcommittee has proposed an amendment to the Northeast Waterfront Historic District ordinance to clarify the existing limitations on signage within the historic district.

**2. Broadway Family Apartments (NE Waterfront**

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**Historic District**—This Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC) project to build 85 units of affordable rental housing, a childcare center, and 2,000 square feet of commercial space affordable on the old freeway site on the north side of Broadway between Battery and Front streets is moving through the City approval process. Recently, however, a lawsuit was filed by an adjoining landowner raising the issue of whether it was legal for the State of California (Caltrans) to transfer the freeway parcel out of public ownership for less than fair market value.

### **3. Embarcadero Hotel Project at Broadway and The Embarcadero (NE Waterfront Historic District)**

As reported in the Fall 2002 issue, a new architect was hired to respond to community-wide concerns. While a new architectural design is not yet available, the developers have indicated their commitment to reducing the previously proposed height and room count, eliminating the bridge over Davis Street, and preserving the area's view corridors. Concerns remain, however, that a 65-foot high structure at this location would block views from the Embarcadero, that the large parking structure proposed as a part of this project would be unsightly, and that a hotel may not be the most desirable use for the site.

**4. 55 Francisco Street**—A tentative subdivision map has been approved to divide this 48,700 square-foot parcel, containing an existing office building fronting on Montgomery Street and a four-story, commercial parking garage fronting on Francisco Street, into two lots. The applicant now has two years to complete the process and record the final map—with liberal provision for extensions. Although no formal proposals for the use of the site or the reason for the lot split were provided, we understand that design is underway for the addition of residential units on top of the existing garage.

**5. Northern Waterfront National Register Historic District**—The Port has completed the preparation of a National Register nomination of the bulkheads and piers along the northern waterfront from Pier 45 to Pier 48. The nomination will be submitted to the State Office of Historic Preservation before the end of the 2002.

**6. Piers 1-1/2-3 and 5**—This redevelopment and historic rehabilitation project involving the replacement of what is now primarily office space with a mixture of office, retail, restaurants and cafes will be presented to

the Port Commission for final approval in December. In November, these piers will be listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the "Central Embarcadero Piers" and the project will qualify for the 20 percent federal historic preservation tax credit.

**7. Piers 27-31**—The developer, the Mills Corporation, has submitted its application for the 20 percent federal historic tax credit and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report is now underway. While the executed Development Memorandum between the Port and the developer would seem to preclude any further programming changes to this project, a significant reduction in the size of the YMCA facility was publicly announced in November. This further validates the concerns of the northeast waterfront community, including the Fisherman's Wharf merchants, who feel that ongoing changes in the programming of this site exacerbate the non-compliance of the project with the original Request for Proposals, which required that the project be predominantly recreational. With this latest site plan revision, recreational uses constitute only 27 percent of the project. The Mills Corporation has requested a 13-month extension on its exclusive negotiation period to "work out regulatory details," the main component of which is the State Lands Commission's Public Trust restrictions on non-maritime office use, now a significant portion to this project. THD will continue to play an active role in this process and to press its concerns regarding parking, traffic, urban design, noise, nighttime activities and lighting as well as the impact of the proposed office, retail and restaurant uses on existing Port and neighborhood businesses.

**8. Washington/Drumm Project**—This is a proposal for an 84-foot high mixed-use project on the current site of the Golden Gateway Tennis Club, consisting of 120 condos, parking for 170 cars, a swimming pool and a fitness center. The nine-court tennis court layout would be replaced with six courts, and the existing pool complex would be demolished. The project proponents and opponents have both made presentations before THD's P&Z Committee. THD played a prominent role in downsizing the original Perini Corporation development proposal for the Golden Gateway complex, which included a total of eight high-rise apartment towers, and favors retention of the open space and recreational facilities on this site.

**9. Fisherman's Wharf Special Area Plan**—In July 2000, the Port Commission and BCDC adopted

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## PLANNING AND ZONING

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amendments to their respective plans establishing consistency based on a shared vision for waterfront development and public access in the area between Pier 35 and China Basin. Specific policies were adopted to provide a continuous network of public access, parks and plazas at the shoreline edge. The 2000 amendments also provided for a major public plaza, extending to the Bay, in the area of the triangle parking lot at Fisherman's Wharf. A joint Port/BCDC planning committee has been announced to facilitate the realization of this plaza. THD is well represented on the Committee and we will be actively advocating for public improvements at Fisherman's Wharf to reconnect and maximize benefits to our community as well as Fisherman's Wharf merchants and visitors.

## VI. JACKSON SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT

*(Established in 1972, this is the City's first historic district. The district is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.)*

**1. Special Commercial District Legislation Proposed**—Supervisor Peskin is working with Save Jackson Square to draft special ground floor commercial district-type controls to stop the conversion of retail spaces to office use and to encourage an environment more conducive to the type of retail activities that have been the history of Jackson Square.

**2. 921 Front**—Proposal to put windows back into openings now filled in, restoring a pre-existing state in the style of other windows.

**3. 451 Jackson**—Proposal to add a small projecting, non-illuminated sign similar to one already on the building.

**4. 722-724 and 726-728 Montgomery Street (Belli Building)**—The settlement agreement entered into by the city attorney with Landmark's Board member and owner Nancy Ho Belli on March 1, 2002, to settle the City's lawsuit to protect these historic landmark buildings, requires the owner to protect the historic exterior against deterioration due to exposure to the elements and sets forth a specific time schedule for completing the necessary repairs and rehabilitation. The settlement also requires the owner to pay the City \$100,000 in penalties. While things are still moving at a glacial pace and THD is concerned that the time frames for restor-

ing the building set forth in the settlement may be falling behind schedule, THD has received assurances from the City that the building will be restored before it deteriorates further.

## VII. LANDMARKS

**1. 1338 Filbert Cottages**—The proposed designation of this unique collection of cottages as the City's newest landmark, initiated with the support of Russian Hill Neighbors and THD, will soon be considered by the Board of Supervisors. These cottages are significant not only for their cultural role in the City's art history and connection to the Art Institute, but for their architecture and garden setting as one of the last assemblages of turn-of-the-century small scale cottage housing. The owner/developer is proposing to clear the site to make way for luxury condominiums.

## VIII. LEGISLATION

**1. Billboard Controls**—To establish procedures to put teeth into the voters' recently passed anti-billboard initiative, legislation has been introduced by supervisors Leno and Peskin to require the owner of a general advertising sign to register the sign and pay an annual fee into a fund to monitor compliance with, and enforcement of, sign regulations. The legislation further requires the owners of existing signs to submit a current inventory of all their signs in the City, including an affidavit under penalty of perjury stating that they do not knowingly have any illegal general advertising signs in San Francisco. The proposed ordinance would authorize a reduction of the fee for owners in compliance or who initially register before the deadline, and would impose an increased fee and substantial penalties for failure to comply.

**2. Parking Permits**—Beginning in December 2002, inspectors from Department of Public Works (which gives out permits for construction projects to use street parking) will meet with each building contractor applying for street use permits to ensure that they understand laws regarding sign posting, use the space efficiently and move out of the space as soon as possible. The new law increases permit fees to discourage long term use of parking spaces, and also makes it more difficult to get permit extensions (renewals) without just cause. Additionally, a hotline is now operating to provide information about current permits and to receive complaints for follow-up by DPW inspectors.

**That Street Space Info Line is 554-5824.**



## Presidio Update

# San Francisco's New Downtown—or Marin's Newest Suburb?

By Bill Henslin

**A**ttention, commercial developers! Prime bay-and-Golden-Gate-Bridge-view land is now available for long-term lease. Rent a development-ready, 23-acre parcel for just \$5.8 million per year! At that rent, your glistening new 850,000 square-foot office complex will generate less than \$7 per square foot in annual rent for your landlord—far below market rate. Throw in a 590,000 square-foot parking garage if you'd like, and don't worry about property taxes or city-imposed fees; there aren't any! Where can you find this unparalleled opportunity? Mission Bay? Pier 70? No. It's in San Francisco's New Downtown—the Presidio National Park.

When Congress decided to preserve the Presidio as a national park, the Bay Area received a precious gift and a profound responsibility. It's time now to take a serious look at how well we're living up to that responsibility, and what kind of park we're creating.

We need to ask tough questions, now that the Presidio Trust has explicitly rejected the vision of a national park dedicated to sustainability and peaceful international cooperation. Why has the Presidio Trust ignored the will of the majority of thousands of commenting citizens? Why does the Presidio Trust's new plan allow almost three times the new development allowed by the Park Service's original plan? Why does the Presidio Trust want to build up \$1.37 billion in cash reserves—more than six times the reserves held in 2001 by the world's most prominent Seattle-based coffee house chain? And why

should the proposed Lucasfilm office development proceed, now that Presidio Trust documents state that the park can be financially self-sufficient without it?

### The Birth—and Death—of Vision

The National Park Service worked alongside the public to forge the original plan. The Presidio was to have "all the exceptional qualities of a traditional national park," meeting our needs for recreation and solitude while preserving the site's cultural, natural and scenic resources. With its large housing stock, the Presidio would also be "home" for a number of people. And it would have a higher purpose: As historic buildings were restored, the Presidio would become a "global center dedicated to addressing the world's most critical environmental, social and cultural challenges," including the challenge of peaceful global conflict resolution.

The Thoreau Center for Sustainability represents one step toward realizing this vision. The restored portion of Crissy Field offers another glimpse of this park's potential.

But will this potential be realized now that the Park Service manages only part of the park?

In 1996, Congress divided the Presidio into two portions. The coastal portion (Area A) is managed by the Park Service. The remainder (Area B) is under the jurisdiction of the Presidio Trust, a corporation owned by the federal government and overseen by a board of directors. Congress gave the Park Service responsibility for public interpretive services, visitor orientation

*continued on next page*

## Presidio *continued*

and educational programs throughout the Presidio. Other responsibilities are shared by the Park Service and the Presidio Trust.

Congress stipulates that by 2013, the Presidio Trust must be "financially self-sufficient," generating enough revenue to cover Presidio Trust operating expenses, capital improvement costs and reserve set-asides. A financial analysis prepared by Sedway Group (a subsidiary of CB Richard Ellis) projects that in the long run, annual operating expenses will total approximately \$44 million.

The Presidio Trust is well on its way toward this goal. Its current budget shows roughly \$40 million in total annual income, not including appropriations, borrowing, interest income or rent from the planned Lucasfilm office complex. And buildings comprising hundreds of thousands of square feet still await reuse, including the Public Health Service Hospital and most of Fort Scott.

The financial potential is promising. But what is the Presidio Trust's vision?

In August, the Presidio Trust finalized a new plan for Area B: the Presidio Trust Management Plan. The PTMP "updates and succeeds" the National Park Service's 1994 plan, the General Management Plan Amendment. And the PTMP departs from many of the GMPA's central objectives:

- The PTMP explicitly rejects the vision for a park "dedicated to addressing the world's most critical challenges," stating that "the Trust cannot share the vision that the Presidio should be preserved for a purpose beyond itself."
- The PTMP broadens the criteria for selecting tenants to include, potentially, almost any commercial enterprise one might find downtown or in an office park.
- The PTMP allows up to 2,150,000 square feet

of new "replacement" construction, almost triple that allowed by the GMPA. The 2,150,000 feet include 850,000 feet of offices and 590,000 feet of underground garage proposed by Lucasfilm.

- The GMPA envisioned a vibrant Presidio, but the PTMP envisions such a busy park that the Presidio Trust anticipates placing "limitations," "prohibitions" and "management controls" on visitor uses. So much traffic is anticipated that stoplights may be required inside the park.

An October 2001 report by the General Accounting Office notes that "the Trust's [financial] assumptions appear to be conservative because they tended to minimize projected revenues." Yet the PTMP Financial Analysis projects that from 2013 on, the Presidio Trust will always have at least \$70 million in annual income. What will become of the surplus? The Presidio Trust's goal, according to the "PTMP Financial Assumptions" document available in the Presidio Trust library, is to build a cash reserve of \$1.37 billion, mostly to cover the cost of replacing all the historic buildings in 55 or 60 years — at the "end of their useful lives."

## No Need for Lucasfilm

What about the proposed Lucasfilm (Letterman Digital Arts Center) development? According to the PTMP Financial Analysis, the Presidio Trust can be financially self-sufficient without the Lucasfilm development. Understandably, the analysis projects that an absence of \$5.8 million in annual ground rent from the 23-acre site would delay completion of certain capital projects elsewhere in the park.

Other questions should also be asked about the LDA project. Lucasfilm's original proposal calls for Lucasfilm to have the right to approve proposed tenants and uses within 300 feet of the LDA project and, with some conditions, the right

## Presidio *continued*

“to assign all or part of its interest in the Ground Lease” and “to sublease the Improvements.” Does the final lease agreement with Lucasfilm grant these rights? If so, doesn’t this call into question the Presidio Trust’s claim that “A unique strength of [the Lucasfilm proposal] is that the improvements will be occupied primarily by a known collaborative group of users”?

In a recent public meeting on the proposal, Lucasfilm revealed that it had minimally scaled back the amount of above-ground building space it intends to build: from 900,000 square feet to 850,000 square feet—a reduction of only 5.5 percent. At the planned rent of \$5.8 million per year, Lucasfilm’s 850,000 square feet will be paying the Presidio Trust less than \$7 per square foot per year. If Lucasfilm were to sublet 150,000 square feet at \$45 per square foot per year, the sub-tenants would pay Lucasfilm \$6.75 million in annual rent — about \$1 million more than Lucasfilm will be paying the Presidio Trust!

Lucasfilm also announced that its 1500-car underground garage will be mostly off-limits to public use, except during occasional special events.

Lucasfilm has not yet signed a ground lease agreement, so its occupation of the park is by no means a done deal. For over a year now, the THD has been urging the Presidio Trust to walk away from its lease. In October of last year, THD filed a protest with the Presidio Trust which included the following: “This [Lucas] project is regrettable. George Lucas is an exciting personage in our society, has made a tremendously creative contribution to our popular culture, and his work is generally considered part of the “arts.” But when it is built, his facility appears to us that it will essentially have the appearance and character of the dreaded “office park”.... This project is not needed

for self-sufficiency, given astute, thoughtful and minimalist management of the Presidio.”

### An Opportunity for Stewardship

Returning to the original questions: How well are we living up to our responsibility as local stewards of a national park, and what kind of park are we creating?

During the PTMP planning process, thousands of public comments supported the GMPA plan and/or its core concepts. Only a few supported the level of development, commercialization and overuse which the final PTMP allows. The Presidio Trust Act of Congress requires the Presidio Trust to exercise its authorities “in accordance with the general objectives of the General Management Plan ... approved for the Presidio,” and only one such plan - the 1994 GMPA—existed when the act was signed in 1996.

In 1996, former President Clinton praised the notion of a financially self-sufficient Presidio, claiming that “This, our newest of national parks, is showing the rest of our national parks the way to the future.”

If we want that future to be bright, it’s time to ask questions. It’s time for Congress to hold a “field hearing” in San Francisco. Congress is busy, but how often will we have an opportunity to create a National Park virtually from scratch? Let’s not lose this opportunity.

*Bill Henslin is co-Founder of Friends of the Presidio National Park, an all-volunteer coalition of citizens including members of neighborhood, environmental and preservation organizations.*

*For more information on the Presidio, see [www.FriendsOfThePresidioNationalPark.org](http://www.FriendsOfThePresidioNationalPark.org) and [www.presidiotrust.gov](http://www.presidiotrust.gov).*



# Daughter of a Su

# An excerpt from the THD Oral History Project's Interview with Ines Belli

*By Art Peterson*

There was a time when hiring a moving truck at the corner of Union and Columbus was about as easy as hailing a cab is today—maybe easier. All around Washington Square, draymen parked horse and cart, looking to carry the next load. Around 1918, the mother of Ines Belli took advantage of this convenience when she decided her boys—who were later to become a judge and a lawyer—were being blamed, in their Lombard Street neighborhood, for vandalism they didn't commit. "We're moving," said Rose Molinari.

"What about my wine?" said Ines's father, Giovanni.

"I don't care about your wine," said Rose .  
"We're leaving tomorrow."

So Rose went to the Square and hired the movers who transported the family to 948 Union, a property that Ines's father had built for income, and where Ines Belli has now lived for all but three of her 88 years.

Ines Belli told this story, and many others, to Audrey Tomaselli as part of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers' Oral History Project. Reading these interviews, one enters a North Beach time warp, where ATM machines

and cellular phone stores don't exist; instead, there are the shops and businesses of a bustling turn-of-the-century immigrant community.

You're transported to a world where one purchases a funeral wreath at the Azzaro Flower Shop—site of the present day Caffé Roma. Or you cross the street to the Lippi Brothers, now Ben and Jerry's, to shop for dinner at the "most gorgeous vegetable store you ever saw. You'd go there and they'd wrap everything in a piece of newspaper. You'd get your carrots, your beans and anything that went into minestrone."

Ines and the other contributors to this project are tangible links to a North Beach past. They know, for example, that the word



Ines's Father and Uncle, circa 1912. PHOTO COURTESY INES BELLi.

# Sunset Scavenger

ANCHOR, spelled out in tiles at 515 Columbus (in front of the U.S. Restaurant), come from a drug store by that name that was once at that address. And they know the real use of the still present "hanging roofs" — roofs with clotheslines on them, often surrounded by a picket fence — where "everyone would take a great basket of wet clothes and go up three flights... and you'd go hang everything—diapers—everything."

But as important as these accounts are for helping us preserve the memories of an earlier time, Ines and the other respondents also provide a glimpse into a generation of immigrants that feeds the diversity that is America.

Most everyone on the block where Ines lived came from the small towns around Chiavari, Italy and none of them left much behind worth hanging onto. The Molinari family came from hill country. After all, Ines says, "What can you grow on a hill?" In 1929, the Molinaris, now prosperous, returned to Italy to examine the property still owned by the family. Ines's oldest brother looked at the land and told her father, "Whatever you do, don't leave it to me."

"It was like that," says Ines.

For the most part the early arrivals were single men. "At first," says Ines, they came to make money and go home, "but then, when my father's generation came, their idea was to stay."

Ines's father went to work as a garbage man for the Torres company. He soon bought his own horse and wagon, and founded the Scavengers' Protective Union. That eventually became the Sunset Scavenger Company. To this day, one of Ines's sons remains

involved with the company.

## The Immigrant Ethic

Like many others from immigrant families, Ines has stories of honesty and hard work paying off. "There was a store on Geary called Nathan Dorman, and they had all beautiful crystal and

*continued on page 27*

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# From the Desk of Supervisor Peskin

*By Aaron Peskin*

I want to spend this column reporting on what I consider steady progress towards a fairer, more open planning process within San Francisco's Planning Department.

I am pleased to say that I have established a healthy working relationship with the Planning Department, and have experienced remarkable support for a set of goals to improve local planning and development. They are:

- 1) To balance the activities of the Planning Department to strengthen enforcement of the Planning Code, and enhance long-term and citywide planning.
- 2) To increase communication with community stakeholders, and create projects that mutually benefit the developer and local neighborhoods.
- 3) To ensure consideration of all perspectives in cases that come before the Planning Commission and Board of Appeals.

Local enforcement of the Planning Code is badly needed, whether in the case of illegal billboards, unlawful demolitions or un-permitted construction. The Planning Department, at the strong urging of the Board, now funds a modest four-person enforcement division. These planners spend much of their time responding to reports about specific cases from local residents.

Recently, at the supervisors' strong urging, the department expended funds to hire additional planners for the department's long-range planning division. One task of the long-term planning division is to manage the Better Neighborhoods process, a comprehensive neighborhood-by-neighborhood planning effort in areas such as South of Market and Balboa Park



that are experiencing rapid changes in land use.

Proposition D, passed by the voters earlier this year, splits Planning Commission and Board of Appeals appointments between the mayor and president of the Board of Supervisors. Although this newly appointed commission has not met, all indications promise broader representation on these boards and greater consideration by all sides of local planning issues. Also, having this Board of Supervisors sit as the appellate body to the Planning Commission on some types of permits (such as Conditional Use Permits) has encouraged the commission's decisions to be sound and fair. Recently, Supervisor Matt Gonzalez has introduced legislation (that I'm co-sponsoring) aimed at ending the practice of a developer misleading the commission and community groups through incorrect presentation of facts.

The Planning Department's newly appointed legislative and community liaison, Jean-Paul Samaha, has engaged in strong outreach with supervisors' offices and community groups to communicate about certain projects of interest before these projects become highly problematic. Also, for over a year, I've held monthly meetings with the planning director and zoning administrator to ensure that neighborhood groups are given an effective voice on planning issues and that compromises agreed to by all parties on individual projects actually materialize.

Serving as supervisor over the last two years has convinced me of the opportunities to allow growth and development in San Francisco while maintaining the character of its residential and

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# PROGRAM AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

By Suzanne Nelson

We've had some great events in the past three months!

## August:

August means "Jazz on Grant" and we decided to celebrate this year with two venues for our progressive cocktail party. First stop was Lilith, where we enjoyed cheese and wine while viewing the wonderful new fall line of clothes from Paris. Next we moved down the street to the North Beach Gallery for more food and wine in the garden, this time accompanied by great art and live music. We drew for prizes, which were generously donated by Lilith and North Beach Gallery, and included CD's from the North Beach Jazz Festival. Five lucky attendees claimed these prizes and comments were that everyone had a great time. Special thanks to Lilith and North Beach Gallery for co-hosting this successful event.

## September:

A perfect day welcomed back the THD Family Picnic with the wild parrots in the trees and butterflies fluttering about. We enjoyed shared dishes and some amazing homemade goodies, played games and just sat on the lovely new grass at Pioneer Park visiting with old friends and making new ones. It was truly a family day with babies and kids and THD members of all ages. The highlight of the day was the presence of Carol Peterson (aka Madame Zoë) who brought magic in her costume and did face painting (some of us did ankles) and told fortunes. Elizabeth Peterson (aka Madame Zelda) was her very friendly assistant. Thanks to all the hardworking volunteers, and to Alan Paul for donating beer from San Francisco Brewing Company. From the comments I received, this will become an annual event that everyone anticipates.

Another "bring back" event was the Upper

Grant Avenue Art Fair. While this was not a THD Social, THD was the main sponsor of the event and provided most of the fantastic volunteers. Look for this fair to appear again next year after a very successful beginning.

## October:

This year we decided to not just celebrate the Italian Heritage Parade but to declare it Italian Heritage Month.

We began by celebrating The Parade. It's so much more fun to enjoy the parade with friends and neighbors sitting right on the street and sharing lunch. We had a prime location on Columbus at Vallejo, outside Trattoria Pinocchio.

And we ended the month with a General Membership Dinner at Caesar's Restaurant. What can I say about dinners at Caesars? There is a special magic that seems to happen there time after time. Luigi always welcomes us like family, the food is good and so plentiful, and the ambiance is perfectly conducive to fun and conversation. Jan Holloway, Neighborhood Beautification chair, did a fantastic job of providing a program honoring some of our own North Beach "special" Italian neighbors. Read more about our guests in Jan's Neighborhood Beautification Report.

As I write this, I've just returned from the 3rd THD/Russian Hill Bowling Challenge. We had a fantastic time and I'm happy to report the score - 93-91 and yes, we are the champs for the second time. The trophy can be viewed in Sondra Leque's window, since she had the high score. Good work team and we are looking forward to next year's rematch!

It's been fun to get to know some of our new members at these events and I want to thank all the hard working volunteers again—you are all awesome!



# Solving Coit's Towering Lines

By Bill Seeliger

**W**hen David F. Myrick wrote *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill* in 1972—a book much-loved by our Dwellers—he included a picture showing about 20 cars idling in the ascending lane of Telegraph Hill Boulevard. They were waiting for a parking space at the Coit Tower parking lot so that their occupants could visit the top of Telegraph Hill and the tower.

That picture was taken in October 1971, 31 years ago. Regrettably, it is still true today that, on every weekend day and every holiday, year round, between about 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., you'll still find anywhere from 20 to 40 cars sitting in the same line, engines running, passengers impatient, while the immediate neighbors' air is being polluted. Meanwhile, the 39-Coit bus, that could

have taken these visitors to the top of the hill and back down while their cars waited elsewhere, is stuck somewhere in the line, nearly empty and significantly delayed.

It makes for a frustrating experience for the roughly 2,000 people who visit—or attempt to visit—the tower on weekend days and holidays. Too often, they tire of waiting in line and simply turn around and abandon their wait. So we're left with cranky visitors who have to wait forever before reaching the top and disappointed ones who give up and never get to see the tower.

It also frustrates people living on or near the route, who have to put up with the traffic and the pollution.

Telegraph Hill Dwellers has initiated a proj-

*continued on next page*

## Neighborhood Concerns Put Norton Statue on Hold

By Bob McMillan

**N**eighborhood concerns have put plans to erect a statue of San Francisco historical figure, Emperor Joshua Norton, at the top of the Peter Macchiarini steps on hold.

Though the THD Board had given its conditional approval to the project in February, at the May Board meeting opponents of the project expressed concerns about, among other things, the size of the statue, the potential impact of the project on open space, the possibility of an increased incidence in crime, interference with views of the downtown area, and the project's potential impact on a revived plan to rebuild the Kearny steps between Vallejo and Broadway. Because proponents and opponents of the statue did not appear to be communicating with each other, the Board recommended, and the two sides agreed to participate in, a mediation process to attempt to resolve

their differences.

Representatives from both groups attended mediation sessions on August 8, 2002 and September 5, 2002. Compromises were made and agreements reached on most of the divisive issues. When a reduced version of the statue and revised arrangement of the plaza were thereafter presented to the neighborhood, however, substantial opposition was still expressed to the project. Accordingly, on November 12, 2002, the THD board of directors voted not to take a position on the issue, reasoning as follows: "Given the strongly held and differing viewpoints regarding the proposed Emperor Norton Project, the Telegraph Hill Dwellers Board takes no position at this time."

The THD Board's motion puts the Norton project "somewhat in Limbo," says Norton proponent Dan Macchiarini, who has made it clear that

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## 39 COIT BUS

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ect to attempt to fix this long-standing problem. There is now a working group in place, including representatives from THD, the Department of Parking and Traffic, Muni and the Muni Citizens Advisory Council, that is pursuing a solution. A draft proposal and an implementation plan have been created that are being supported by the Muni CAC.

The solution is easy enough: Get visitors out of their cars and onto the 39-Coit. The current strategy has three major parts:

Station a parking-control officer at the Coit Tower parking lot, in walkie-talkie communication with the 39-Coit bus driver. As the bus approaches the line of cars, the PCO stops any

car getting ready to go downhill, allowing the bus to ascend the hill using the opposite lane.

Advertise and publicize extensively: "Instead of driving, take the 39-Coit—the fun bus—to the tower, and bypass the backed-up traffic."

Change the bus route to be more accessible to tourists, especially those staying in the Fisherman's Wharf area. On its present route, the 39 is next to invisible to these people. Running the bus down Jefferson Street, for example, would attract more passengers. In addition, decorate the bus in a festive livery that makes its Coit Tower destination clear.

Another idea would expand the route to include a stop at the top of the Crooked Street—Lombard and Hyde—neatly covering several tourist destinations in one convenient bus line.



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# Beautification Committee News

By Jan Holloway

In keeping with the spirit of the North Beach October Italian-American days, the Beautification Committee presented awards to three very special Italian-Americans at the THD's October general membership meeting.

The first Heritage of the Hill award was given to Rosalie Taggi, recognizing her life's work in our community. It honors both her service in World War II — when she donned the metal helmet and worked as a welder building Liberty ships in the Richmond shipyards—and her many decades of community service in our neighborhood.

Rosalie arrived in San Francisco, she thinks, in 1930, as a young bride from Pennsylvania. She has lived on the same block of Vallejo Street ever since. After arriving here, she and her husband rented an apartment for about \$10 a month adjacent to the apartment building, which they subsequently

bought and remodeled, and where they raised their daughter Beatrice. Like a lot of other local Italians, her husband made wine in the basement.

Rosalie remains an active parishioner of St. Francis of Assisi Church at Columbus and Vallejo.

Rosalie and Bea planned many fundraisers, such as wine tastings, and paid for free dinners for seniors in the church hall. In the early 1970s, surveying goods left over from a rummage sale, she obtained additional donations from the community and received permission to open a thrift store (with proceeds donated to the Archdiocese), which was of enormous benefit to the community.

In accepting the award for Rosalie Taggi, who unfortunately was unable to attend, longtime friend Pat Cady remarked: "She knew her customers well. She knew who was in need and would set aside baby clothes and kitchen goods for young

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O'REILLY'S

## BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

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families and find suitable clothes for job hunters. For years, she and her corps of volunteers, all unpaid, washed and had clothes cleaned before putting them out for sale. She was a highly respected manager and benevolent friend, freely donating both time and money to the church and its neighborhood."

For more information about Rosalie Taggi see her oral history written for THD by Audrey Tomaselli at the North Beach Public Library.

The second award of the evening went to Lorenzo Petroni, longtime owner of the North Beach Restaurant at Stockton and Green, whose efforts on behalf of the neighborhood's recent beautification projects earned the committee's award for a "Person Who Makes A Difference." The genial Petroni emigrated from Lucca, Italy in 1957, ostensibly to study mathematics in Syracuse, New York. But on a pre-university odyssey to see the United States, he landed in San Francisco. Immediately recognizing that "to make sure he got a square meal" he had to become a waiter, he did. After a few years, he found a partner and they opened their own restaurant and have been here in North Beach ever since.

Lorenzo is deserving of this beautification award specifically for the leadership he demonstrated in two projects that took place in North Beach during the last year.

In June 2001, the first meeting of the North Beach Beautification Advisory Board was held in Lorenzo's restaurant. Gathering regularly and frequently at the North Beach Restaurant, the board, which included representatives from many city departments, local businesses and neighborhood groups (including THD), worked on several environmental issues. Encouraged both by DPW's willingness to improve the situation of our streets and Lorenzo's determination to see a change, we tackled graffiti abatement, problems of the garbage and litter in streets and alleys, additional street sweeping, Green Patrol and other mechanisms designed to improve conditions in District 3.

Among new concepts under discussion, Lorenzo championed the Adopt-A-Street program (newly re-tailored for us from the earlier-but-now-defunct Adopt-A-Block project). With

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Parkview Beauty Salon Owner Joe Jachetta accepts his Heritage of the Hill award. Also pictured are (L-R) Gerry Crowley, June Osterberg, and Jan Holloway.

PHOTO BY MARV KASOFF

## BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

*continued from previous page*

THD's Beautification Committee, he helped sign up many merchants who promised to maintain the sidewalks in front of their shops and encourage their neighbors to do likewise. Lorenzo's mantra was "if people took care of a portion of the street in front of their establishment or home, we could be on our way to a cleaner city."

Lorenzo also provided valuable contributions to the North Beach Bankers' Neighborhood Clean-up Consortium (A project we reported on in the Fall 2002 *Semaphore* —ed.).

The third honoree introduced was Joseph "Joe" Jachetta. Joe is a beloved beauty salon owner as well as an accomplished entertainer. His life and service in our community deserves the "Heritage of the Hill" award. He was commended, not only for his 55 years of bringing beauty to the clients of his Parkview Beauty Salon, but for the enjoyment he has brought to audiences

through his professional entertaining. In introducing Joe, June Osterberg, a friend for decades, told how many of his clients (a few who have been with him from the beginning) come in to have Joe "do" their hair, after which they often take him to lunch.

Joe, who was born on Vallejo Street and attended school here until his induction into the army in World War II, started his business in 1948 on Powell Street in the old Palace Theatre building. In 1958, he moved to the corner of Powell and Union and was there until 1989 when he was forced by rising rent to move to the present location at 629 Union, right on Washington Square.

Kindly, genial, youthful Joe has given so many people great joy. Joe's clients have often brought plates of succulent "goodies" to share while waiting for his attention at the Parkview. Osterberg also recalled how Joe received a medal of appreciation from the Jewish community here in San Francisco, as one of the members of the army unit that liberated Dachau concentration

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## BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

*continued from previous page*

camp at the end of World War II.

Joe's wonderful song-and-dance routines are legendary, as anyone who has attended the annual fundraisers for the Salesian Boys and Girls Club and reviews at the Italian Athletic Club can attest. He still performs and will be appearing at the "always a sell-out" revue on February 21, 22 and 23 at the annual Salesian event.

Joe and his wife, Lucy, have raised a wonderful family of six children and now have many grandchildren to enjoy.

To read more about Joseph Jachetta see his oral history written for THD by Audrey Tomaselli at the North Beach Public Library.



advertisement

## Greenwich Steps Garden Update

Maya Armour and many volunteers from the Greenwich Steps and 101 Lombard have completed the planting of a lovely variety of drought-tolerant, flowering shrubs along the lower Greenwich Steps. The plants look and smell wonderful. The combined volunteer hours dedicated to meeting, plant selection, logistics planning, and ordering, not to mention the back-breaking work of carting up headers, soil amendment, installing drip systems and actual planting, have yielded a beautiful result. Special thanks to the DPW landscape architect Jessica Perez for her guidance, advice and active participation in the stairway garden project. The Friends of the Valetta Heslett Garden invite you to see the first stage in the rehabilitation of a very special place in our neighborhood.



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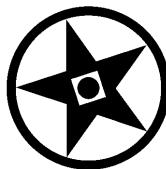
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**[www.sfai.edu](http://www.sfai.edu)**

## NORTH BEACH PAST *continued*

dishes, and Papa had them as a customer. And one day Papa saw this big box outside, and he looked and saw what he thought was glass (he didn't know anything about crystal). Papa told Mr. Dorman about it, and Mr. Dorman never forgot his honesty. Whenever Papa asked for a raise, he gave it to him without question".

### Buried Treasure?

Frugality, as well, was part of the immigrant ethic. "My father decided to put some money away in case another crash came. So he put — I think—\$500 dollars in a tin box in the basement. The trouble was he forgot about it for many years. When he opened the box up the money had turned to mush. All these Italians were great at hiding money away. I wouldn't be surprised if there are boxes hidden out there in all those backyards we see from this window. And then they die and nobody knows it's there."

Over the years, this collection of immigrant families developed the traditions and institutions of a community. There was, of course, the church. Ines remembers the construction of Sts. Peter and Paul in the 1920s. She recalls her communion when only the basement was finished.

Tried to get organized without success?



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"We used to go to the old church on Grant and Filbert for catechism. But my confirmation was held upstairs. They finished the new church between my communion and my confirmation."

Ines belonged to the Handmaidens. It was, she says, "a Catholic thing.... We had little white outfits and we marched in the Columbus Day Parade. I suppose we were ready to be sainted, but I doubt it."

Then there were the social clubs. "Papa belonged to the Balilla Club. They would have dances and picnics—family affairs. We'd go to these picnics and everyone would bring their jug of wine in a doctor's case. See, it was Prohibition.

"Balilla was some kind of Genovese hero who killed someone with a slingshot. The men had their meetings down in Garibaldi Hall on Broadway between Columbus and Kearny. It was very exclusive. There were only 30 or so members. And new members only got in when someone died."

And, of course, there was the important community business of getting the young folks married off to an Italian. Typically, a lot of these pairings were sparked at weddings. "That's how you met people: at weddings." Ines's two oldest boys met their wives [who are sisters] at a wedding, and Ines met her future husband, Rino, the same way.

*For the whole story of Ines Belli as well as other personal dramas collected by the Oral History Project contact Audrey Tomaselli at 391-1792. Members of THD may borrow these transcripts for a week. Copies are also available at the San Francisco History Center at the Main Library.*



# Hill Residents Look to Improve Peter Macchiarini Steps

by Marv Kasoff

Telegraph Hill has been blessed over the years by many residents who have not only appreciated the unique setting in which they live, but have taken stock of their surroundings and asked "How can we make this better?" They have asked the question, and then gotten to work cajoling, planning, organizing, fund-raising, digging and planting. The results are there for all of us to enjoy: Jack Early Park, the Filbert Steps, the Greenwich Steps, the Montgomery Street landscaping, the Vallejo Steps and, most recently, Pioneer Park, still a work in progress. Generations of hill dwellers have labored to make this little corner of the city an urban garden out of what used to be a gritty, hardscrabble rock.

The latest effort, just now getting under way, is the project to rebuild the Peter Macchiarini Steps (aka the Kearny Steps), between Broadway and Vallejo. Long seen as an eyesore, and slowly crumbling into an adventuresome, dangerous climb up from Broadway, the Macchiarini Steps have been the target of hill dwellers' landscaping zeal before. Now, with the Pioneer Park rebuild under their belts, some of the intrepid denizens of Telegraph Hill have resurrected old plans, and launched a fresh assault on this corridor connecting the hill to Enrico's, Tommaso's, Café Niebaum-Coppola and the Financial District.

The project objectives: rebuild the steps to meet codes, make them safer for pedestrians, and add handrails for the weary and the elderly; widening the steps to re-emphasize foot traffic instead of auto traffic; adding greenery, plantings and vegetation to enhance the attractiveness of this corridor most visible from downtown;

reworking the lighting for safety and aesthetics; and in general making the Macchiarini Steps a worthy addition to the hill's collection of hanging gardens, parks and access streets.

Under the guidance of Rod Freebairn-Smith and Janet Crane, architects of the Vallejo Steps, neighbors have been meeting, discussing alternatives, putting together wish-lists and participating in the great San Francisco tradition of speaking their minds. Surprisingly, there appears to be great support for the overall concept, and neighbors are coalescing around specific proposals for the steps. One plan is to expand the tiny open space at the top of the steps, an area now used by the locals for tai chi and showing off grandchildren, and by tourists for taking photos of the Coppola building, Chinatown and the Financial District. The hope is to terrace that part of the stairs and triple its size without impinging on the access to the top. Meanwhile, the foot of the steps would provide café seating for Enrico's and the Green Tortoise to make a transition between the commercial strip of Broadway and North Beach on the one hand, and the residential neighborhood of the hill on the other. Gentle, curving steps, generously landscaped, would connect the top of the hill to the bottom, while providing access for emergency vehicles and step dwellers' cars. Space for urban artwork may also be part of the mix.

For all those who wish to become part of this latest effort at beautifying the hill, and adding to the necklace of step gardens around it, this is your chance to get in on the ground floor. We hope that the Macchiarini Steps will someday soon take an honored place alongside the other successes which so gracefully adorn our neighborhood.

# Rebirth of an Art Fair in North Beach

By Bob Booker

**I**t was a grand and wonderful moment in North Beach history, that autumn Sunday, Sept. 22, 2002, when the New Upper Grant Avenue Fall Art Fair came to fruition, created by a handful of artists, poets, dreamers, merchants, neighbors and community-minded denizens of North Beach.

It brought back memories of the old, tarnished glory of our neighborhood, when real characters wandered our narrow streets and alleyways in search of something less tangible than the dream of gold or a house on the hill. What started out as a humble vision of a different, more community-focused street fair became a very diverse and eclectic community production with many mighty fine artists, street musicians, poets and neighbors gathering together in some of the nooks and crannies on upper Grant, between Green and Filbert, to celebrate and honor the neighborhood's artistic heritage.

The new fair's co-founder and visionary, Dan Macchiarini (his father Peter and his mother Virginia founded the original North Beach Festival in 1953; it must be in the blood), was the work-horse extraordinaire with a supporting cast that included Gerry Crowley, Telegraph Hill Dwellers president, chairperson Suzanne Nelson, merchant Kathleen Dooley, artist Sherry O'Donnell, poster wizard Howard Munson, jeweler Lisa Ambrosiani,

antique dealer Conor Fennessy, creative consultant and charm lady Diane Porter, sound master-technician Sara Gregory, treasurer Ms. Beth Collins, and myself—to name only a few.

In all, this year's first, new neighborhood art fair had over 100 artists and merchants of one kind or another filling up their creative booth spaces on both sides of the street in the two block area on upper Grant. It was an old formula worked out to a T in the 50's with plenty of breathing and yakking space. By all accounts, it was a complete success and will be repeated next fall.

As one of our neighbors, Jim said, "It showed the way. It showed all the character and spirit of this neighborhood; a neighborhood coming together."

A special thanks goes out to all the major sponsors: THD, the North Beach Chamber of Commerce and Marsha Garland, Myles O'Reilly of O'Reilly's Irish Pub & Restaurant, North Beach Pizza, the many good Friends of the Fair and the participants. This was truly a unique experience and a daring experiment for all to create from scratch, a one-of-a-kind community fair that had something for everyone—in the spirit of the old North Beach made new again. And it is now on video! Watch for the premiere showing of this important documentary by Howard Munson Productions in one of our local cafes in the very near future.

## NORTON *continued from page 20*

he will not pursue the project without the endorsement of the THD Board. He says he's considering either incorporating the statue into the developing plans for the Macchiarini Steps (See pg. 28—ed.) or perhaps moving the statue to another venue like Washington Square, Aquatic Park, or perhaps even the Embarcadero. "I'm not

giving up on it at all," says Macchiarini. "We are not going to go forward and try and put Emperor Norton up on the steps without the endorsement of the THD Board of Directors," he explains, but adds, "there may be an endorsement in the future."

## THD Welcomes New Members

August to October 2002

Jana Anderson, Kathleen Baldanzi, Zackary Brough, Sal Busalacchi, Annette DeNunzio, Anna Dow, Tom Drescher, Jann Eyrich, Golden Gateways Common II Residential Association, Margaret Gwathmey, Blair & Sharon Helsing, Jacqueline Kanya-Matzen, Jane Rizzo & Troy Kivel, Rona Kram, Nancy Payne Lewis, Josh Milnes, Leonette Morrison, M.D., Alida Morzenti, Howard Munson, Mary Norris, Brian O'Flynn, Blake Robin, Adam Rosa, Zsale' & Brian Schiller, and Lorranie Sherrill.

### SUPERVISOR PESKIN

*continued from page 18*

commercial districts. Growth and preservation of neighborhood character are clearly not mutually exclusive. Those who have criticized neighborhood groups as selfish NIMBYs opposed to growth and change miss the point: If growth is to benefit our city, its economy and its residents, it must fit in well with the existing environment. Ongoing improvements to the local planning process should allow us to make more "win-win" land use decisions.



### CLASSIFIED ADS

*Classified rates are \$20 for 4 lines, \$30 for 5-7 lines. Please call 788-8667 to place an ad. Next deadline is February 1.*

**For a Voice in Your Neighborhood Join Telegraph Hill Dwellers.**

### NEW MEMBER INFORMATION

Sign Up or Sign a Friend Up as a member of Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

Complete and mail to THD, PO Box 330159, SF, CA 94133

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# THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

**You can make a difference! Join one of THD's committees, meet and work with your fellow Hill Dwellers to improve life on the Hill.**

## STANDING COMMITTEES

**Parking and Transportation.** Chair, to be determined. Promotes efforts to ease congestion, optimize white zones, upgrade public transportation. Works with Department of Parking and Traffic.

**Planning and Zoning.** Coordinator, Mary Lipian, 391-5652; [lipianmw@aetna.com](mailto:lipianmw@aetna.com). Monitors and reviews proposed development projects for consistency with applicable City ordinances. Works with Planning Department staff and represents THD before the Landmarks Board, Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator and other regulating bodies to protect historic resources and maintain neighborhood character. Assists members to learn more about and participate in planning and zoning issues.

**Semaphore.** Editor, Bob McMillan, 362-6969; [bob@filbert.net](mailto:bob@filbert.net). The editor and staff produce a quarterly magazine for THD members.

**Program.** Chair, Suzanne Nelson, 986-6210; [suzanne\\_nelson@yahoo.com](mailto:suzanne_nelson@yahoo.com). Arranges social events, including quarterly membership meetings and get-acquainted social functions.

**Budget.** Maya Armour, 986-1474; [mlarmour@pacbell.net](mailto:mlarmour@pacbell.net). As prescribed in bylaws for Treasurer.

**Membership.** Chair, Tom Noyes, 981-8520; [tom@noyesfamily.com](mailto:tom@noyesfamily.com). As prescribed in Bylaws for Financial Secretary.

## SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND PROJECTS

**Parks and Trees.** Chair, Arthur Chang, 331-1500, ext. 733; [achang@surfnet.com](mailto:achang@surfnet.com). Information and projects concerning local parks, green spaces and street trees.

**Neighborhood Beautification**  
Jan Holloway, 398-2055; [hollowayfearnart@aol.com](mailto:hollowayfearnart@aol.com). Creates opportunities to improve, beautify, and preserve the Hill. Through its awards program, recognizes individuals and businesses who enhance our neighborhood. Facilitates cleanup, gardening and graffiti removal.

**Oral History Project** Chair, Audrey Tomaselli, 391-1792; [tmsli@earthlink.net](mailto:tmsli@earthlink.net). Taped interviews provide historical documentation of living and working in the neighborhood.

**THD Web Page.** Webmaster, Peter Overmire, 989-3945; [plo@overmire.com](mailto:plo@overmire.com). Shared information about meetings, local concerns and events.

## LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

**Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods.** Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; [gerrycrowley@aol.com](mailto:gerrycrowley@aol.com). City-wide organization interacts with other neighborhoods to discuss common problems.

**North Beach Neighborhood Coalition.** Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; [gerrycrowley@aol.com](mailto:gerrycrowley@aol.com). Tel-Hi-sponsored group of residents, merchants and government agencies working together to address neighborhood issues.

**N.E.R.T.** June Fraps, 392-1187; [june-fraps@juno.com](mailto:june-fraps@juno.com). Energizes members to take emergency disaster response training program sponsored by the City.



## WEB SITE = [www.thd.org](http://www.thd.org)

That's Us! Pete Overmire (989-3945; [plo@overmire.com](mailto:plo@overmire.com)), a longtime THDer and former officer has set up this site for Telegraph Hill Dwellers. Access it to see the sensational look he has created. Lend him photographs and graphics relevant to the Hill that he can scan in. Call or e-mail information about upcoming meetings in the neighborhood and at City agencies, and ideas and concerns you want the rest of us to know about between *Semaphores*.

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## THD CALENDAR

**2nd Saturday Stair & Garden Work Parties**, December 14, January 11, February 8, March 8. Meet at Pioneer Park. For more information call 552-7774.

### DECEMBER

8th Holiday Party  
Julius Castle, 2-4 p.m.

15th, 16th Chinatown

Community Street Fair

24th General membership dinner

### JANUARY

6th General membership dinner

Look for your invitations for exact times and locations as well as additional events.

### FEBRUARY

3rd Cocktail party  
15th Chinese New Year Parade

Dates and locations subject to change.

## Schedules of Committee Meetings

**PLANNING & ZONING:** First Thursdays. Call for time and location.  
986-7070.

For more information, log on to  
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